

This is My Face

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Summary: Two Marines onboard the Pillar of Autumn observe the supersoldier accross its massive hangar, sparking a philisophical musing on symbols, heroes, and how the Master Chief embodies such things.

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**\*\*This Is My Face\*\***

"I wonder what he looks like under that helmet."

"Desperate for a date, pal?"

Corporal Henning rolled his eyes as he started taking apart his sniper rifle. His spotter could find just about every opportunity for a crude joke. He supposed that such a keen sense of observation and timing was what made Private Dale Cobb so good at his job. But at the moment, as he finished disassembling his rifle onboard the fleeing Pillar of Autumn, Henning was just too tired for dirty humor.

"I'm serious. You ever saw his face before?"

Cobb shifted on their makeshift seat atop an empty munitions crate. "What do you care?"

"Just curious is all," Henning said, peering down the length of the detached barrel.

Private Cobb didn't look at Henning as he spoke. He just smiled and continued to stare forward. "That's problem with us. Humanity, I mean. We're never satisfied with what we have," he pointed out calmly. "In this case, what we know and don't know." Cobb dropped his gaze to the floor, still smiling, before looking back up to continue staring at the walking tower of olive green armor across the cavernous hangar.

The sniper tried to keep his hands steady on the pieces of his weapon as he burst into laughter. "You choose now to get all philosophical on me, Dale?" He gave his spotter a quick jab on the shoulder. "Drug use can get you some heavy time in the brig, Dale!"

Cobb didn't seem fazed by his partner's stupid jokes. He shrugged, "Just sayin' is all. Ever heard of Pandora's Box?"

Henning stopped working and let out a heavy sigh. "Are you comparing a Spartan's face to a goddamn box filled with all sorts of evil shit?"

Private Cobb grinned at his friend. "You don't understand, man." He looked out toward the Spartan, seemingly lost in the utter lack of identity in the cold, gold visor. "You know why them Spartan fellas were made public, right? Morale-boosters, Henning. Higher ups want to make the civvies back home feel better. Safer."

The Corporal, satisfied with the state of his weapon, started to snap the pieces back together in swift motions of militaristic precision, no thanks to the repetitious hours of practice in Basic. Without looking up from his work, he continued the conversation. "Okay, your point?"

"My point, is that you wanted to know what his face looked like," Cobb said, demeanor now completely changed. In the place of the witty smartass was now an apparently thoughtful, mature young man. "They're more than just hardcore motherfuckers. They're symbols, man."

Corporal Henning paused for a moment, trying to see what his partner meant, but also comprehend this side of Dale Cobb he never saw before. He wondered if Cobb looked up to the Master Chief - or any of the Spartans - as some kind of personal hero. He didn't say another word, letting his friend go on.

Cobb opened his mouth to speak, but hesitated, searching for the words on the space between his boots. He pointed to his face. "This is my face."

"Pretty."

"It's one of the things that makes meâ€¦| \_Me. \_It gives me an identity." Cobb's lips opened again as he furrowed his brow, trying to speak his mind. "It's likeâ€¦|" Dale held up a hand and snapped his fingers: the man's equivalent to a light bulb popping to life above his head. "Superman. You've seen those graphic novels in museums, haven't you?"

"Think so. Blue tights, big, red cape?"

"Yeah, that's him. How would you feel if you were one of those folks in that city o' his and you found out that he was actually just some yuppie with glasses named 'Clark Kent'?"

Corporal Henning simply raised an eyebrow, securing the final piece onto his rifle. He waited for him to continue, but found him simply staring at something in the distance. He followed his gaze and found his eyes fixed on the Spartan, loading an weapon of his own. So he joined his friend in their impolite stare.

As he observed the towering killing machine, he started to understand - or at least hoped he was. The sheer lack of emotion of the reflective visor, it's sheer lack of human expression of any kind, how it reflected its surroundings rather than take them in like a regular pair of eyes. It suddenly struck him, the visor's complete neutrality, betraying no feelings of the person beneath it. It was the perfect mask; it was the perfect symbol.

\_ Pandora's Box. Superman. I get it. \_In giving the hero - the \_symbol\_ - an identity, it shattered that fragile vestige of hope, that underneath all the Greek god-like armor, what lay beneath that brilliant gold mask was quite simply, another human. Superior, perhaps, but nothing more than a fellow mortal - a being unworthy to be held in such an elemental regard.

"Ignorance is bliss," Cobb finally said.

Henning finished for Private Dale Cobb. "And \_that,\_" he said, oddly glad he was all the more wiser for his talk. "That is \_his \_face."

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